

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 13675

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, JA

SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTION TO SOHYO-AFL-CIO CONTACTS

SUMMARY: RECENT MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON BETWEEN AFL-CIO PRES MEANY AND NEWLY ELECTED SOHYO CHAIRMAN MAKIEDA PRODUCED SHOCK WAVE IN JAPANESE LABOR CIRCLES WHICH HAS STILL NOT SUBSIDED. DOMEI, TREASURING ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH AFL-CIO, WHILE EXTREMELY SURPRISED AND INITIALLY FEARFUL, NOW SEEMS MOLLIFIED AFTER RECEIVING REASSURING LETTERS FROM MEANY AND AFL-CIO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR LEE. SOHYO MODERATES, ECSTATIC OVER AFL-CIO WARM RECEPTION OF MAKIEDA, BELIEVE IT WILL HELP NEW SOHYO LEADERSHIP'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP CLOSER TIES BETWEEN SOHYO AND UNIONS IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES. SOHYO'S COMMUNIST MINORITY STRANGELY SILENT ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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THESE DEVELOPMENTS. SOHYO LEADERSHIP WILL MOST LIKELY ASSIMILATE SLOWLY REACTION IN ITS OWN ORGANIZATION, DOMEI AND AFL-CIO BEFORE MAKING ANY NEW MAJOR OVERTURES TO U.S. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT LEADERSHIP, PARTI-

CULARLY SEC GEN TOMIZUKA, WOULD WELCOME INVITATION TO NEXT YEARS AFL-CIO CONVENTION. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH OVER ONE MONTH HAS PASSED SINCE SOHYO CHAIRMAN MAKIEDA'S MEETING IN WASHINGTON WITH AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MEANY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR LEE, SHOCK PRODUCED BY THESE MEETINGS HAS BARELY SUBSIDED AND THEY REMAIN PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION AND SPECULATION IN JAPANESE LABOR CIRCLES.

2. REASONS FOR THIS INTENSE INTEREST ARE MANIFOLD. IN THE FIRST PLACE, MAKIEDA VISIT TO U.S. TOOK ALL BUT A SMALL GROUP OF SOHYO LEADERS BY COMPLETE SURPRISE AND SHATTERED THE FOLLOWING WIDELY HELD JAPANESE ASSUMPTIONS. A NEWLY ELECTED SOHYO LEADER WOULD NOT TRAVEL ABROAD SO SOON AFTER TAKING OFFICE AND IN ANY CASE, WOULD CERTAINLY AVOID THE UNITED STATES, CATEGORIZED THROUGH THE YEARS AT SOHYO CONVENTIONS AS "IMPERIALISM'S CITADEL." NO SOHYO LEADER COULD OBTAIN APPROVAL FROM SOHYO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOR CALL ON AFL-CIO AND WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE SAME WITHOUT SUCH APPROVAL. AFL-CIO, BECAUSE OF ITS LONGSTANDING FEUD WITH SOHYO OVER COMMUNISM AND ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH DOMEI, WOULD NEVER AGREE TO MEET WITH SOHYO LEADERSHIP. (COMMENT: FEW HERE REMEMBER PRESIDENT MEANY'S CALL ON SOHYO HEADQUARTERS IN 1964 OR ARE AWARE THAT LEADERS OF SOHYO AFFILIATES OFTEN VISIT AFL-CIO HEADQUARTERS. END COMMENT.)

3. DOMEI HEADQUARTERS RECEIVED GREATEST SHOCK, SINCE IT FIRST LEARNED OF VISIT FROM NEWSPAPER REPORTS QUOTING MAKIEDA STATEMENT OF WASHINGTON PRESS CONFERENCE AUGUST 2 THAT HE AND MEANY HAD JUST MET AND HAD AGREED TO PATCH UP AFL-CIO SOHYO TIES. DOMEI INTERNATIONAL BUREAU DIRECTOR AIHARA, PERSONALLY EMBARRASSED BECAUSE HE HAD NO ADVANCE WARNING OF MEETING, SOUGHT URGENT CLARIFICATION FIRST FROM EMBASSY AND THEN FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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AFL-CIO HEADQUARTERS. SUBSEQUENT CORRESPONDENCE FROM MEANY AND LEE, PROVIDING REASSURANCES THAT AFL-CIO WOULD CONTINUE TO PLACE PRIORITY ON ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH DOMEI AND WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE ANY MAJOR NEW INITIATIVES TOWARDS SOHYO WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING WITH DOMEI, MOLLIFIED DOMEI LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, DOMEI AGAIN CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY AUGUST 11 PRESS REPORTS THAT MAKIEDA AND LEE, AT SECOND MEETING, HAD AGREED THAT THE TWO FEDERATIONS WOULD SEND DELEGATIONS TO EAVH OTHER'S CONVENTION. STRONGLY WORDED LETTER FROM LEE TO MAKIEDA, CALLING THESE PRESS REPORTS UNFOUNDED, AND REQUESTING SOHYO TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, SEEMINGLY HAS ALLEVIATED LATEST FEARS OF DOMEI, WHICH HAS NOW LEAKED CONTENTS OF LETTER TO

SELECT GROUP OF JAPANESE LABOR REPORTERS. NEVERTHELESS, WE UNDERSTAND FROM DOMEI SOURCES THAT ITS NATIONAL RAILWAY AND POSTAL AFFILIATES STILL FEEL CONSIDERABLE RESENTMENT TOWARDS U.S. SIDE FOR HAVING RECEIVED WHAT THEY TERM "COMMUNISTS." (COMMENT: THESE DOMEI SECOND UNIONS FOR YEARS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO WIN CONVERTS AWAY FROM THEIR LARGER SOHYO-AFFILIATED RIVALS ON GROUNDS THAT SOHYO IS COMMUNIST DOMINATED AND THEREFORE UNACCEPTABLE TO U.S., JAPAN'S CLOSEST ALLY.)

4. REACTION OF SOHYO HAS BEEN EQUALLY AS COMPLEX. SOHYO ICFTU AFFILIATES, SUCH AS ZENTEI (POSTAL WORKERS), WHOSE PRESIDENT ISHII APPARENTLY WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN PERSUADING MAKIEDA TO REQUEST APPOINTMENT AT AFL-CIO HEADQUARTERS, WERE ECSTATIC OVER NEWS THAT MEANY NOT ONLY AGREED TO MEETING BUT ALSO HAD GIVEN MAKIEDA VERY FRIENDLY RECEPTION. THEY CLAIM THAT BY MAKING AN OVERTURE TO THE AFL-CIO HIS FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS AFTER TAKING OFFICE AND BY TRAVELING ALL THE WAY TO WASHINGTON TO DO SO, MAKIEDA WAS IN JAPANESE EYES APOLOGIZING ON BEHALF OF SOHYO TO THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT FOR THE ANTI-AMERICAN EXCISES OF PAST SOHYO LEADERS WUCH AS IWAI AND OHTA. IN SAME VEIN, ZENDENTSU (TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION) OFICIALS TOLD LABATT RECENTLY THAT MAKIEDA VISIT IS FIRST STEP IN NEW SOHYO POLICY OF ENCOURAGING CLOSER TIES WITH WESTERN UNIONS, INCLUDING THE U.S., AND THAT WARM RECEPTION GIVEN MAKIEDA IN WASHINGTON WILL MAKE IT MUCH EASIER FOR NEW SOHYO LEADERSHIP TO SECURE EVENTUAL CONFIDENTIAL

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APPROVAL OF THIS POLICY.

5. SOHYO SEC GEN TOMIZUKA, WHO SINCE TAKING OFFICE HAS DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE FRIENDLINESS TOWARDS EMBOFFS, TAKES SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT POSITION. HE TOLD LABATT RECENTLY THAT MAKIEDA VISIT IS NOT NEW POLICY DEPARTURE BUT RATHER LOGICAL EXTENSION OF SOHYO'S CURRENT ACTION POLICY WHICH FORMALLY ENDORSES CLOSER TIES BETWEEN SOHYO AND UNIONS IN "CAPITALIST" NATIONS ON GROUNDS THEY SHARE COMMON PROBLEMS SUCH AS DISPUTE OVER RIGHT OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES TO STRIKE.

6. IN CONTRAST, COMMUNIST "ANTI-LEADERSHIP" ELEMENT IN SOHYO HAS BEEN STRANGELY SILENT ON THE MATTER. JAPAN COMMUNIST PARTY (JCP) SUPPORTERS ON SOHYO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD DID NOT OPPOSE EITHER MAKIEDA'S INITIAL REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF HIS MAKING COURTESY CALL ON AFL-CIO OR HIS REPORT UPON HIS RETURN RECOMMENDING CONTINUED EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH AFL-CIO. NO READY EXPLANATION AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNIST SILENCE. NATIONAL POLICE AGENCY OFFICIAL RECENTLY OFFERED TO EMBOFF THEORY THAT JCP ITSELF TRYING TO DEMONSTRATE

THAT IT CAN DEAL WITH U.S., AS EXEMPLIFIED BY JCP PARTICIPATION IN DIET DELEGATIONS WHICH VISITED U.S. IN CONNECTION WITH LOCKHEED AFFAIR. OTHERS SUCH AS PTTI LOCAL REP HATSUOKA (A ZENTEI ALUMNUS WHO HELPED FACILITATE VISIT) BELIEVE COMMUNISTS MERELY SAVING THEIR FIRE FOR A SPECIFIC ISSUE SUCH AS A VISIT INVITATION TO OR FROM THE AFL-CIO.

7. MAKIEDA HIMSELF HAS TREATED HIS WASHINGTON VISIT VERY CIRCUMSPECTLY SINCE HIS RETURN. HE DECLINED TO HOLD A CUSTOMARY ON-THE-RECORD PRESS CONFERENCE AND, AS MENTIONED ABOVE, REFRAINED FROM ASKING SOHYO EXECUTIVE BOARD TO DO ANYTHING MORE THAN BESTOW GENERAL BLESSING UPON BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN SOHYO AND AFL-CIO. HE HAS NOT, REPEAT NOT, CLAIMED EITHER PRIVATELY OR PUBLICLY THAT HE REACHED ANY AGREEMENT WITH AFL-CIO WITH REGARD TO SENDING DELEGATIONS TO EACH OTHERS CONVENTIONS. MAKIEDA REPORTEDLY IS SOMEWHAT APPREHENSIVE THAT RECENT LETTER FROM LEE, TAKING ISSUE WITH NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF HIS AUGUST 11 WASHINGTON CONFERENCE, MAY CONFIDENTIAL

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MEAN THAT AFL-CIO ENTHUSIASM FOR EXPLORING NEW TIES IS COOLING AS A RESULT OF DOMEI PRESSURE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT MAKIEDA ALSO CONSIDERING TRIPS TO USSR AND PRC SOMETIME BEFORE NEXT SOHYO CONVENTION IN ORDER TO PREVENT COMMUNISTS IN SOHYO FROM CHARGING THAT HE VEERING FROM SOHYO'S MIDDLE OF THE ROAD COURSE.

8. MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIALS PLEASED WITH MAKIEDA VISIT. THEY SEE IT AS COMPLEMENTING SOCIALIST (JSP) VICE CHARIMAN EDA'S VISIT TO U.S. LAST FALL AND SIGNIFYING THAT JSP AND ITS LABOR SUPPORTERS SEE URGENT NEED TO DEMONSTRATE TO JAPANESE ELECTORATE THAT THEY, AS WELL AS RULING LDP, ARE ACCEPTABLE TO U.S. LEADERS. MIN LAB ALSO BELIEVE THAT MAKIEDA-TOMIZUKA TEAM AIMS TO STRIP SOHYO VERY GRADUALLY OF ITS MOST EXCESSIVE MARXIST IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE AND TO EASE IT TOWARDS SOME ACCOMMODATION WITH DOMEI AND IMF-JC.

9. COMMENT: WE DO NOT EXPECT ANY MAJOR NEW INITIATIVES TOWARDS AFL-CIO ON SOHYO'S PART FOR TIME BEING. LEADERSHIP WILL NOW ASSIMILATE REACTION OF ITS OWN ANTI-MAIN-STREAM, DOMEI AND U.S. SIDE. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE SOHYO HEADQUARTERS IS TAKING ONE ADDITIONAL SMALL STEP TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INTEREST IN CLOSER TIES. FOR FIRST TIME IN YEARS, IT HAS JUST REQUESTED EMBASSY TO NOMINATE ONE OF ITS OWN, LIVELIHOOD BUREAU STAFFER FUKUDA, FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OBSERVATION PROJECT OF LABOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM. IF HIS PARTICIPATION IS APPROVED, HE MAY WELL REQUEST PRIVATE MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON WITH AFL-CIO STAFFERS TO FOLLOW-UP ON MAKIEDA VISIT.

WE BELIEVE SOHYO MAINSTREAM WILL BE WATCHING FOR
SIGNAL FROM AFL-CIO DURING COMING YEAR. SINCE TOMIZUKA
RECENTLY TOLD LABATT AND LAB MIN OFFICIALS ON SEPARATE OCCASIONS THAT

IF HE WERE INVITED TO AFL-CIO CONVENTION NEXT YEAR HE WOULD
MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND, AN INVITATION MAY BE THE
SIGNAL SOYYO IS WAITING FOR.
SHOESMITH

CONFIDENTIAL

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